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IN

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day visit to  
postponed

# As froth spills out of Bellandur lake, effluents keep flowing in



Nearly four months after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) issued a stern warning to the State government to get its act together or face action, things don't seem to have improved in the city's frothing lakes.

Over the past two days, after the deluge that opened the week, the situation has worsened considerably. By Wednesday night, froth had scaled the mesh placed on Yemlur bridge and spilled onto the road, leaving vehicle users in a sea of toxic foam.

While Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) responded by installing four sprinklers in the area to suppress the froth, questions have been raised about the efficacy of the short-term measures – including forms of bio-remediation – that have not yet had an impact.

### **Domestic effluents**

It was established by an expert committee on Bellandur lake that the churning of detergent-laden sewage at the inlets and outlets of the lake results in the generation of froth. As the inflow increases during rain, so does frothing.

However, while the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) claims to have cracked down on industrial effluents, action on domestic effluents remains primarily through notices. Of the more than 800 apartments and large complexes – which have more than 20,000 sq. ft built-up area – inspected in the vicinity of the lake, around 300 do not have sewage treatment plants, said KSPCB chairman Lakshman.

“Many that have STPs were found to be non-compliant. We have given them, and apartments without STPs, time of three months to rectify the mistakes,” he said.

The preliminary list of apartments and institutions shows that more than 26.242 million litres of sewage is flowing directly into the lakes.

Mr. Lakshman claimed that 99% of the industrial effluents – totalling more than 12.5MLD of sewage – have been tackled. “Illegal units were shut down, while apart from six or seven legal units, the rest were allowed to operate after compliance of effluent treatment systems was checked,” he said.

### **Weeding operations**

The BDA has claimed that 95% of the weeds in Bellandur lake has been removed.

“Because of the rains, the operation has slowed down. But we expect it to be completed within two weeks,” said P.N. Naik, engineering member, BDA.

He said over 19,000 tonnes of wet weeds has been removed and composting will begin within a week.

However, T.V. Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), one of the members of the expert committee, called the steps an “eyewash”. “Industrial and domestic effluents continue to flow into the lake. Encroachments have not been removed. Even the removal of weeds is not being done with sincerity. These are just ad hoc measures and [are] clearly not enough,” he said.

Reacting to the National Green Tribunal pulling up the State in an emergency hearing on Thursday, Jagadesh Reddy, member of Varthur Rising, said: “It is evident that the recommendations of the expert committee are not being followed and citizens are apprehensive about the funds allocated for cleaning the lake.”

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